QANTAS SOCCEROOS v OMAN TUESDAY 11 OCTOBER 2011 ANZ STADIUM

THE SOCCEROO

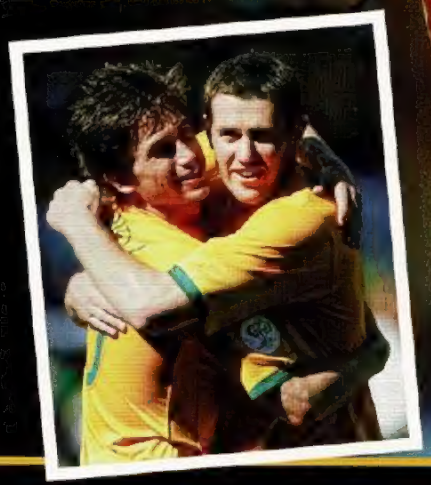
AUSTRALIA

ISSUE: 23 $10.00

BIG IN JAPAN

Qantas Socceroos star Josh Kennedy leads the Aussie charge in the J-League

PLUS FAN FOCUS MEET THE QANTAS SOCCEROOS AND LINE-UPS



ALEX BROSQUE

The former Sydney FC striker reveals all about his new life in Japan

JAMES TROISI

Up-and-coming Qantas Socceroos star eyes a bright future

ROOS BACK? SUPERSTAR DUO

Qantas Socceroos heroes Emerton and Kewell sign-up for the upcoming Hyundai A-League season seven

LEGENDS: ALEX TOBIN

The one-time Qantas Socceroos colossus recalls his amazing career including marking Diego Maradona

ZELJKO KALAC: MY BEST ROOS

Big "Spider" selects his best Qantas Socceroos side and as you'd expect he has some surprises in store!

AUSTRALIA

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AUSTRALIA

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FRANK LOWY

FFA Chairman extends a warm welcome to our friends from Oman

Welcome to ANZ Stadium for this important 2014 FIFA World Cup Asian Qualifier between the Qantas Socceroos and Oman. I would like to extend a very warm welcome to our friends from Oman who have returned to Australia after last visiting us in 2009. I trust you will enjoy your stay and our hospitality while you are here.

Tonight's match is the third in our 2014 FIFA World Cup qualification campaign after a strong start with wins against Thailand and Saudi Arabia last month.

Since this stadium was opened in 1999, the Qantas Socceroos have created many memorable moments at this venue - none more so than that special night in November 2005 when we defeated Uruguay on penalties to qualify for the 2006 FIFA World Cup. Not only has that moment been etched into the hearts and minds of all Australians but it also ranks as one of our most celebrated sporting moments of all time.

Recently FFA entered into an agreement with the NSW Government that will see at least three of our 2014 FIFA World Cup Asian Qualifiers to be held here at ANZ Stadium in Sydney's west.

Western Sydney is arguably the heartland of football in Australia with the largest number of registered players in the country. Numerous Qantas Socceroos and Westfield Matildas developed from this particular area and hosting these important matches in this area is recognition of the important role that this region has played in developing football in Australia.

These are truly exciting times for football in Australia. Last weekend the much anticipated Hyundai A-League 2011/12 season kicked off in front of healthy crowds, signalling to all that this will be a season not to be missed. In addition to the Hyundai A-League, the Westfield W-League also starts later this month along with our National Youth League competition.

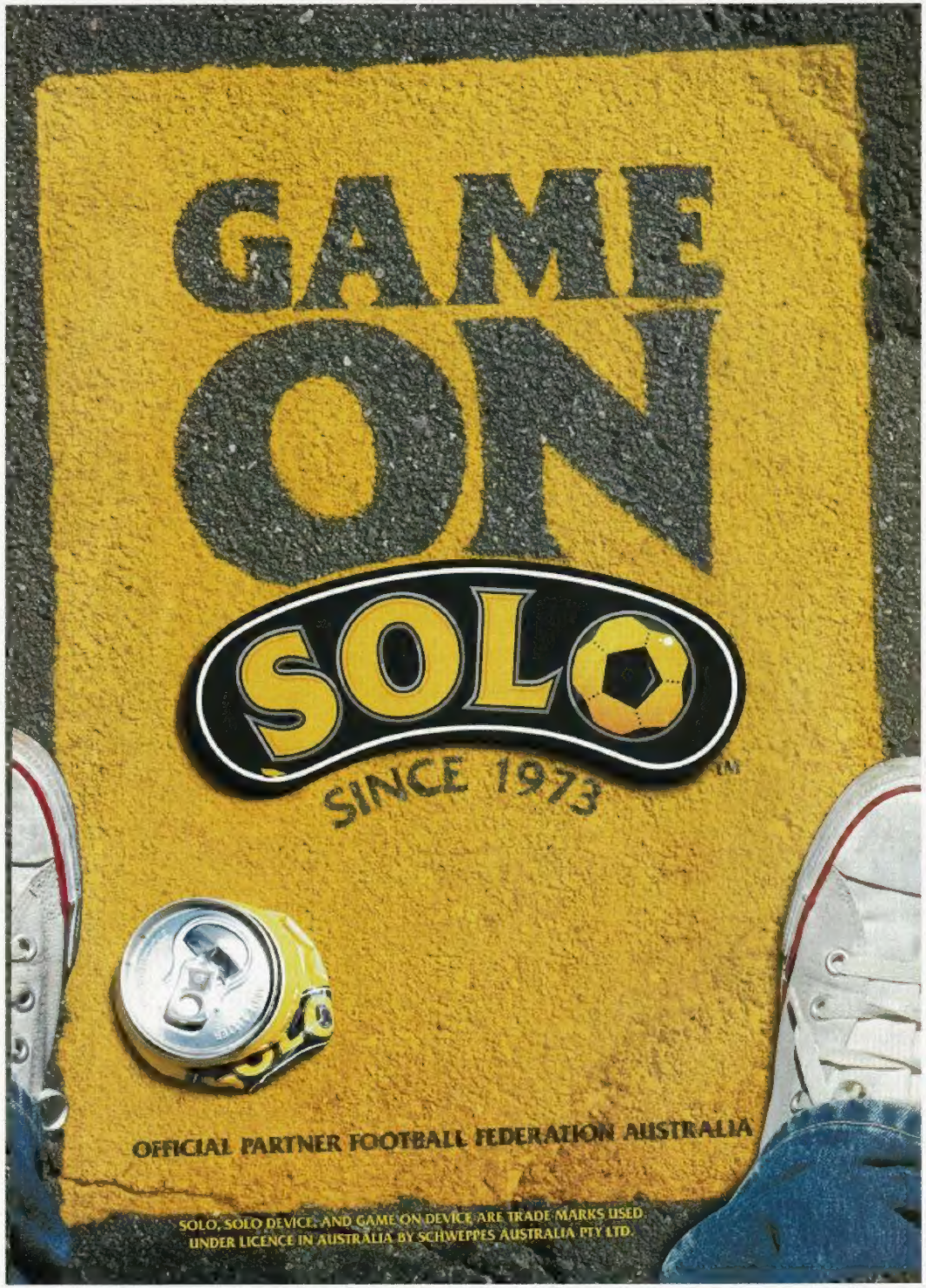
I would like to thank all our partners for their ongoing support and especially to the NSW Premier Barry O'Farrell and his Government for their contribution to hosting tonight's match.

My best wishes to both teams for what I am sure will be a competitive and enjoyable match for all.

Since this stadium opened in 1999, the Qantas Socceroos have created many memorable moments at this venue

Frank Lowy AC
CHAIRMAN
FOOTBALL FEDERATION AUSTRALIA

FOOTBALL FEDERATION AUSTRALIA



BARRY O'FARRELL

The Premier of NSW welcomes Oman and Australia for tonight's important qualifier

I am pleased to welcome the Qantas Socceroos and Oman to Sydney - Australia's global city and football capital - for tonight's 2014 FIFA World Cup Asian qualifier. This match is part of an exciting four-year international football match package between the NSW Government and Football Federation Australia featuring the Qantas Socceroos and the Qantas Olyroos on their respective qualification pathways to the 2014 FIFA World Cup in Brazil and the London 2012 Olympics.

The Qantas Socceroos are well on the way to the next stage of 2014 FIFA World Cup Asian qualification where, should we progress, Sydney will host two round four matches along with the home leg of any Asian play-offs.

This package reflects the NSW Government's commitment to bring more major events to NSW in order to rebuild the State's economy by driving tourism, trade and investment.

Tonight, the Qantas Socceroos will be out to maintain their unbeaten record against Oman. The last time the Qantas Socceroos faced tonight's visitors in Australia was back in 2009 with the Aussies winning the match 1-0. So tonight's clash on the "Road to Rio" is sure to be another exciting encounter here at ANZ Stadium.

Best of luck to both teams and I wish all fans a great night of international football.

Barry O'Farrell
NEW SOUTH WALES PREMIER

This match is part of an exciting four-year international football match package between the NSW Government and FFA

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HOLGER OSIECK

The Qantas Socceroos will not be taking Oman lightly, says Holger

Dear Qantas Socceroos supporters, tonight's game is another important step on our qualifying road to the 2014 FIFA World Cup. And although we started off well in the campaign we still have a long way to go.

Despite the positive start everybody in our squad knows that we haven't achieved anything other than a good starting position so far, and that there is no room for complacency.

Tonight's Oman game will underline this as our opponents are in a must-win situation. But so are we.

We have to stay focussed and concentrated, then – and I am convinced of it – we will win tonight as our team has the necessary potential and quality to be successful. And I hope we also get the right support from all of you in the stadium to make tonight a real "home" game.

To everybody in the stadium, I would like to express my sincere appreciation for you continued support and I hope it will be a memorable and successful night for all of us.

Holger Osieck
HEAD COACH
QANTAS SOCCEROOS

Despite the positive start everybody in our squad knows there is no room for complacency

FOOTBALL FEDERATION AUSTRALIA

QANTAS SOCCEROOS STRETCHED

BUT CLAIM VITAL WINNING START IN BRISSY

Thailand proved there are no easy games in international football when the Qantas Socceroos opened their 2014 FIFA World Cup Asian qualifiers in the Queensland capital last month. The 2-1 victory was the ideal start against a talented Thai side that took an early lead before the Aussies regrouped and hit back to claim the three points.

ROUND-UP

A round-up of the latest happenings in Aussie football

Old pals Archie and Harry share a joke at Melbourne Victory training

Fans are set to unite behind football for the new season

WE ARE FOOTBALL

Unite for the Aussie game

Not long now until the most highly anticipated Hyundai A-League season yet. It all kicks-off on October 8 and to mark the new season a campaign called 'WE ARE FOOTBALL' has launched.

It's about the things we all share as football fans. Regardless of which club we support, our age, gender, background, nationality or circumstance, football belongs to all of us, we're all part owners, we're all fans.

"Fans are the oxygen that keep football clubs alive," said Brisbane Roar coach Ange Postecoglou. "They provide the atmosphere, passion, resources and commitment that makes the game so special."

Last season produced the most thrilling and intense football in the Hyundai A-League's short history.

Following an extended off season that has seen the arrival of Qantas Socceroos Harry Kewell, Brett Emerton, Dario Vidosic, Jon McKain and a host of international imports, season seven shapes to be more action packed and exciting than ever before.

"WE ARE FOOTBALL is calling on the whole football community to speak with one unified voice in support of this great game," said the Head of Hyundai A-League Lyall Gorman. "This is a chance to link all sections of our game from grassroots to Hyundai A-League and football fans, to the players, young and old, who enjoy this great game in the park and on the pitch every week.

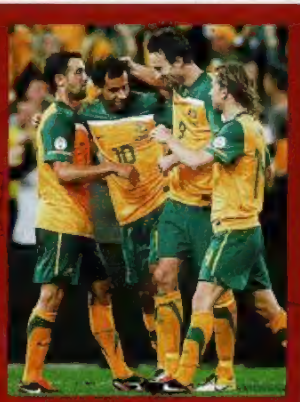
"This is a call to action for all of those 2.5 million people that are an active part of football in Australia to proudly announce that WE ARE FOOTBALL."

Qantas Socceroos captain Lucas Neill has endorsed the call, saying fans bring the energy and create atmosphere.

"Players buzz off this. Fans can help win games that feel lost and they get to feel all the emotions football creates," he said.

"I hope to see exciting games and players impressing for national team call ups.

"And I'm interested to see the impact of Harry (Kewell) and Emmo (Brett Emerton) have on the Hyundai A-League." ▸



Green and gold back in top 20

The Qantas Socceroos have moved back into the top 20 of the latest FIFA world rankings, while the Spanish have replaced the Netherlands at the top.

The latest edition of the FIFA rankings have taken in 170 international matches, with 109 of them being FIFA World Cup or continental qualifiers, with the other 61 being friendlies.

The good news is that Australia are up three places to 19th - the first time they have been in the top 20 since September 2009. This move comes on the back of some impressive results in recent times under coach Holger Osieck, who's been in charge for just over a year.

Australia defeated Thailand and Saudi Arabia last month in 2014 FIFA World Cup Asian qualifiers. And in August the green and gold triumphed over Wales 2-1 in a friendly hit-out in Cardiff.

There has been some movement in the top 20 with current European and world champions Spain jumping ahead of the country they beat in the 2010 FIFA World Cup final, with Germany remaining in third spot.

Copa America winners Uruguay have vaulted to their highest ever ranking of fourth, while Portugal are fifth, ahead of Italy. Brazil and England, who tumbled four places to eighth. Switzerland were the biggest mover in the top 20, zooming up 12 places to 18th, while Bosnia-Herzegovina were also on the rise, climbing 17 spots to 22.

Qantas Joeys qualify for Asian champs

The Qantas Joeys have qualified for the AFC U-16 Championship after defeating Indonesia 5-2 at the Rajamangala Stadium in Bangkok, finishing second in Group G of the qualification tournament.

Speaking after the match in late September, Qantas Joeys Head Coach Jan Versleijen was proud that his team had achieved their goal of qualifying for the AFC U-16 Championship but even happier with the improvement his team made during the tournament.

"What we have learned during this tournament is that there are no easy games in Asia anymore and we need to work hard for every result," he said.

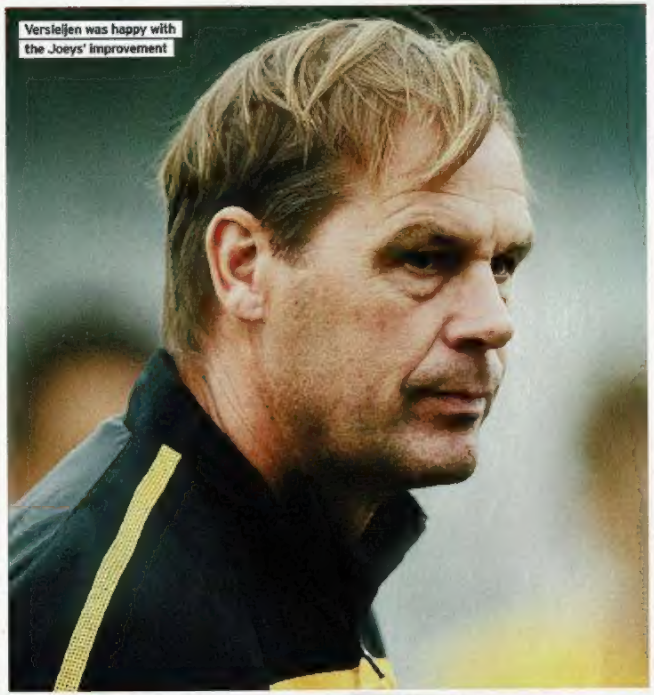
"I'm also very proud of what the players and staff have achieved during this competition."

The AFC U-16 Championship serve as the qualifying event for the 2013 FIFA U-17 World Cup which will be held in the United Arab Emirates in October/November.

The team has now returned to begin planning and preparation for next year's AFC U-16 Championship.

The Qantas Joeys were never in trouble against Indonesia, going ahead from a Taylor Tombides goal in just the third minute.

Despite their opponents drawing level six minutes later, goals from Aussies Aaron Calver, Reece Papadimitrios, Hyunga Tanner and a second from Tombides put the game beyond doubt.



Versleijen was happy with the Joeys' improvement

Foord to provide experience

Sydney FC stars Caitlin Foord, Nicola Bolger, Linda O'Neill and Teigen Allen have been named in the Westfield Young Matildas squad for their AFC U-19 Women's Championship 2011 in Vietnam which act as qualifiers for the FIFA U-20 Women's World Cup 2012.

"I've learned a lot this year especially from the World Cup and Olympic qualifiers and I hope I can bring some of my experience and share it with the other girls," said Foord. "It's been a huge learning experience playing in the senior team and I think it will help me get the best out of myself at the championships next month.

"We've got a really great team [the U-19s] and it will be interesting to see how well we can play together as it's been a while since we were all out on the pitch together."

Star midfielder Emily van Egmond joins the squad in Vietnam following her recent signing for Danish Elitedivisionen club Fortuna Hjørring, where she plays alongside fellow Westfield Matildas Elise Kellond-Knight, Kim Carroll and Leena Khamis.

The top three sides from the AFC U-19 Women's Championship 2011 will progress to next year's FIFA 2012 U-20 Women's World Cup which will be held from August 18-September 8 in Uzbekistan.

Caitlin has World Cup experience

Hoffman hopes to celebrate qualification for London 2012

Green and gold on the road to London 2012

Next month the Qantas Australian U-23s continue their qualification quest when they play Iraq and Uzbekistan in their AFC Asian Qualifiers for the 2012 London Olympic Games.

The green and gold will play Iraq on Wednesday November 23 (venue TBA), followed by Uzbekistan four days later at Parramatta Stadium in Sydney.

The team kicked off their campaign last month in Adelaide when they played the United Arab Emirates in their opening match of the third round of AFC Asian qualifiers. It ended in a 0-0 draw.

At the post-match media conference, Qantas Australian U-23s Head Coach Aurelio Vidmar was disappointed that his team didn't find their rhythm and play to their potential but added that it was still early in the season for a number of his players.

"For the half a dozen games that we have played over the past twelve months this is certainly a performance that was not up to scratch. But in saying that we also have got to look at where we are at in terms of players coming to the end of the pre-season. Some have played quite a few minutes in the pre-season, some haven't.

"I always thought it [tonight] would be a tricky one. We got a point so we'll have to take that and get ready and prepared for the next game against Iraq," concluded Vidmar.

In the other group B match Uzbekistan defeated Iraq 2-0 at the JAR Stadium in Tashkent.

The teams in each group of the third round of qualifying play in a home-and-away format from September 21, 2011 to March 14, 2012, with the winner of each group directly qualifying for the 2012 London Olympic Games Football competition.

The three second-placed teams from the third round will clash in a playoff at a centralised venue from March 25-29, 2012.

The winners of this group meet the representatives of CAF (Africa) for a berth in the 2012 London Olympic Games. ▸

Give smoking a red card!

Smoking kills more than 15,000 Australians each year and is a leading cause of cancer, heart disease, stroke and emphysema. Most of us know of the dangers of smoking, but there are still nearly 2.9 million Australians aged over 14 years who smoke every day.

The Australian Government is committed to reducing the smoking rate and helping Australians to improve their health. The new National Tobacco Campaign is the biggest-ever national campaign of its kind and encourages smokers to quit now.

To help promote the quitting message to football fans across the nation, the National Tobacco Campaign is pleased to announce its association with Football Federation Australia.

Advice is readily available to help smokers quit. Visit www.australia.gov.au/quitnow or call the Quitline on 13 7848 for more information.

Emmo wants to see you for the new season

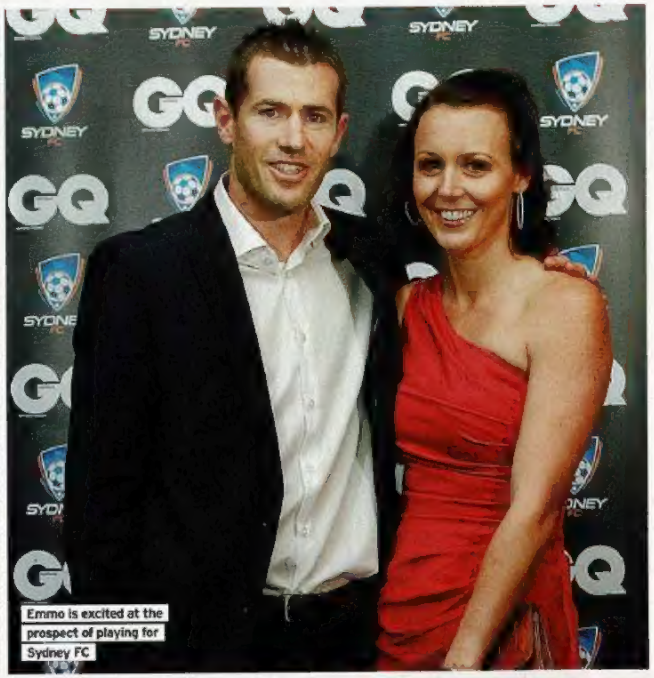
Qantas Socceroo Brett Emerton has returned to Australia to continue his glittering career at Sydney FC but it is the "off field duties" that excites the star midfielder, as he will play an active part in helping the club increase its membership base.

Emerton's performances on the pitch are still the primary focus but it was the ability to help inspire a new generation of fans for his hometown side that attracted the 32-year-old after 11 seasons playing overseas.

"Off the field I'm also excited about the work that needs to be done to increase the Sydney FC membership base and inspire junior players to take up the game," he said. "I've joined Sydney FC and I'd like as many of the Sydney football fans to do the same by becoming a member."

To become a Sydney FC member for the Hyundai A-League 2011/12 season, go to www.sydneyfc.com. All current club members will also have a chance to win the Sydney FC shirt presented to "Emmo" when he joined the club. He signed it and one lucky member will win it at the second home game of the season against Gold Coast on November 6.

Emerton is set to play his first home game for Sydney FC when the Sky Blues take on defending champions Brisbane Roar at the SFS on Saturday October 15. Kick off is 7.45pm. Tickets can be purchased at online at www.sydneyfc.com.



Emmo is excited at the prospect of playing for Sydney FC

App-y days are here for Roos fans

Great news for Australian football fans who have smartphones - you can now follow the national team on their way to the 2014 FIFA World Cup in Brazil with the official Qantas Socceroos app, brought to you by Optus and Football Federation Australia.

Get all the latest news, videos, live scores, commentary, player profiles, notifications and a whole lot more direct to your smartphone. Download the FREE* app now from the App Store or Android Market.

*Data charges apply. Compatible with iOS4+ and Android OS 2+ (excluding OS3+). Videos are only available for users in Australia and New Zealand.

Shield takes up top referee role

Football Federation Australia has announced that former Hyundai A-League and AFC Referee of the Year Mark Shield has been appointed as the new FFA Director of Referees as part of the national body's new Referee Development structure.

Arguably the most successful and well respected Australian match official in world football, Mark has officiated at all levels of the game from junior grassroots to the former National Soccer League, Hyundai A-League, Asian Football Confederation (AFC) Champions League, AFC Asian Cup and FIFA World Cups.

FFA's Head of Hyundai A-League Lyall Gorman believes that Shield's appointment is of great benefit to both the refereeing ranks and football in Australia.

"We are very proud to announce that a referee of the calibre of Mark Shield will head our new Referee Development structure," said Gorman. "His knowledge and experience in relation to refereeing is unequalled in the Australian football community and is a fantastic role model for all aspiring referees."

Shield himself was honoured and excited to be appointed as the FFA Director of Referees and was hopeful he could make another contribution to the game.

"Having been out of the game for three years, it was the right time for me to get back into the game," said Shield.

As part of his new role, Shield will be responsible for the implementation of national policy, technical direction and the national curriculum; overall responsibility for the coaching of match officials; the performance of elite match officials; appointments to national competitions: Hyundai A-League, Westfield W-League, National Youth League and national titles and developing international pathways/ opportunities.

Shield retired from refereeing professionally in September 2008 to concentrate on his family and business interests.

"I'm really excited about the challenge of working with the all referees, clubs, coaches and players to improve the profile of referees in Australia," he added.

Shield is now the refs' chief

Read the play and make it pay! Keep your eye on the prices during every game in the Hyundai A-League season and bet live at your local NSW or Victorian TAB or call 133 390.

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Roos Back Home

The bridge between Qantas Socceroos and the Hyundai A-League continues to strengthen as Australia's domestic competition grows in stature, prestige and star power

Words Aidan Ormond

If you ever needed proof that the Hyundai A-League is on an upward trajectory within the Australian sporting landscape, then the events of the last couple of months have provided it. In case you've been living under a rock, something unbelievably exciting is going on in Australia's domestic game and it's bringing the Hyundai A-League and the Qantas Socceroos even closer together.

Exhibit number one: a stalwart of the Barclays English Premier League turns down a contract extension to fulfil the dream of playing for his hometown side in the Hyundai A-League. That player, of course, is Qantas Socceroo great Brett Emerton, who stunned the football world by leaving Blackburn Rovers after eight glorious years to ink a three-year deal with Sydney FC.

It was one of the biggest stories of the Hyundai A-League off-season.

But what makes this signing so significant - if it isn't already, given he's the first starting Barclays Premier League player to move directly to the Hyundai A-League - is that Emerton saw the switch as a way of maintaining his other dream. That is to help the Qantas Socceroos qualify for the 2014 FIFA World Cup in Brazil.

For these reasons, Emerton's capture was hugely significant for the Hyundai A-League and rightly made headlines both here and in England. Blackburn's loss was very much the Hyundai A-League and Qantas Socceroos' gain.

"Players have shown in the past - and Jason Culina is a prime example - that they can be a consistent part of the Qantas Socceroos set-up while playing their football in the A-League," says Emerton.

"He's probably played the best I've seen him play for a long time, even better than when he was in Europe [with PSV Eindhoven]. So I don't think my standards will drop.

"As far as Holger's [Qantas Socceroos coach Holger Osieck] selection is concerned, he will always pick his players on performances and, as long as I'm playing well for Sydney, I can't see any reason I won't continue to play for the national team."

Huge expectations are part and parcel of the Barclays English Premier League. And that won't change now that Emerton - who scored against Manchester United on the final day of last season - is in the spotlight this coming season in the Hyundai A-League.

But the 32-year-old midfielder believes he is ready for all that the Hyundai A-League will offer in terms of the ups-and-downs of football life.

"I think for every footballer, you're going to go through good and bad periods," explains Emerton. "But I'm old enough and wise enough and experienced enough to be confident in my ability when I'm not playing well and get back to where I should be quickly.

"I've chosen to come back now rather than in a few years' time because I'm in top form and I feel I can really contribute to the A-League.

"Expectations will be high, there's no doubt about that. But I'm prepared to carry those expectations," adds the former Dutch-based star who captained the Qantas Olyroos at the Sydney 2000 Olympic Games.

"Over my career I won the UEFA Cup in 2002, which was a long time ago now, but apart from that I haven't had the chance to lift a trophy. ▸

Hyundai A-League's tick of approval

Attracting talent like Harry Kewell and Brett Emerton is one way of assessing the growing quality and attractions of the Hyundai A-League. Another way is to judge the performance of players who've gone straight from the competition into foreign leagues. Take talented Qantas Socceroo Alex Brosque, for example.

The former Sydney FC man has shown in his first season with J-League club Shimizu S-Pulse that the Hyundai A-League is an excellent breeding ground.

Brosque has eased seamlessly into the top tier of Japanese football - a league generally accepted as the region's number one competition. And he's had some illuminating insights given he's spent five seasons in the Hyundai A-League.

"I think there are a lot of players back home in Australia that could come over here and easily do very well," says Brosque, who has found the net five times for the mid-table Shimizu.

Aside from Brosque, Matt McKay and Robbie Kruse are prime examples of Hyundai A-League players who have become regular Qantas Socceroos on the back of stellar form in the domestic competition.

Kruse and McKay have since used this international exposure to gain contracts overseas with Fortuna Dusseldorf and Glasgow Rangers respectively. It's a big tick for the Hyundai A-League that its best talent is good enough to step up into the green and gold and then head overseas.

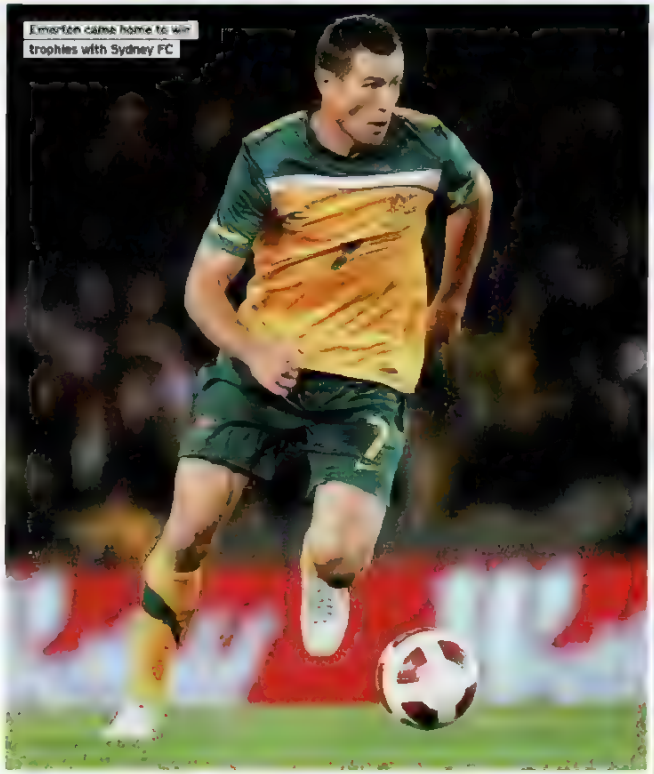
Former Brisbane Roar trio Adam Sarota, Michael Zullo and Tommy Oar are three other examples of young players gaining experience in the Hyundai A-League before heading overseas and catching the eyes of the Qantas Socceroos' hierarchy.

Former Danish World Cup star and Manchester United player Jesper Olsen says the Hyundai A-League is an important league for developing young talent.

"In Australia, we now have a league which gives the opportunity to young players to not only play in the Hyundai A-League, but also be spotted by other countries," Olsen, who was assistant coach at Melbourne Heart last season, tells *The Socceroo* magazine.

"This will help develop the league into a place where if you are good enough, you will leave and give space to other young players coming through, which is essential to growing Australian football at all levels.

"Tommy Oar is an example of a player who spent a very short time in the A-League, has gone abroad and has the ability to show that the A-League is a stepping stone to greater things."



Emerton came home to win trophies with Sydney FC

Jon McKain is a great acquisition for Adelaide

Over 4000 fans watched Harry's first training session as 'Kewell-mania' gripped the country

"Coming here to Sydney gives me the opportunity to do so."

Exhibit number two: if Emerton's signing wasn't enough to confirm the Hyundai A-League's growing reputation, a second massive signing occurred almost simultaneously. And the arrival was of rock star proportions!

Last month, the city of Melbourne basked in the glow of a returning Qantas Socceroo when the talismanic Harry Kewell landed after signing a deal to play for three seasons with Melbourne Victory.

The charismatic star's arrival at Melbourne airport was a media event in itself, with a large number of fans arriving at Tullamarine in the early hours of the morning to catch a glimpse of their new hero.

A huge media presence was there to capture an arrival that briefly brought the airport to a standstill - and the buzz over the former Liverpool and Leeds United attacker has barely dimmed since. Over 4000 fans watched his first open training session with the Victory team as 'Kewell-mania' gripped not only Victoria but the entire country.

And his first pre-season friendly against Adelaide United at Hindmarsh was all set for a sell-out at time of writing. In short, Harry's been the talk of the town.

His new coach at Melbourne Victory - former Qantas Socceroo Mehmet Durakovic - knows how much the ex-Galatasaray man will mean to the side. "We all know what Harry's done over the past years," says the Victory boss. "He's a fantastic footballer."

Kewell, for his part, believes it was the right moment to give something back to Australian football. "I'm a young man and I've got a young family," says 'H'.

"Sometimes you have to do what's right for your career and, in the end, it was the right decision to make."

The star hailed the professionalism of his new club and the quality of the sports medicine staff around the club, and in Australia in general.

"Melbourne were professional and have done everything right to channel me in this direction. I'm here to enjoy my football and I'm at the right club to do that.

"A lot of people say this league's better than that league, but [only] you can determine how good you play. If you put the effort in you can go out there and turn the A-League into a fantastic league."

Like Emerton, the 33-year-old forward has no plans to call time on his illustrious career with the Qantas Socceroos.

"Whether or not I make 2014 [FIFA World Cup] or 2015 [AFC Asian Cup], I want to," says Kewell. "That's my game plan to go out there - if I perform [well], there's no reason why I don't get picked.

"Personally I still feel I can play at the highest level, I want to be able to show that to my team-mates, the players I am going to play against and the fans."

Coincidentally both Kewell and Emerton headed to Europe at the same time in their ▸

careers during the 1990s, as they were both part of a scheme to take talented youngsters to England. Now the pair have returned home at the same time.

In a quirk of fixture fate, Kewell and Emerton's clubs have been drawn to face each other in a classic season opening blockbuster in Melbourne. Needless to say, it's just added to the extraordinary buzz around the start of this new Hyundai A-League season.

In any ordinary off-season, these two landmark signings alone would've been enough to suggest the greatest ever Hyundai A-League season was about to unfold. But there's more...

Two more Qantas Socceroos also signed for the Hyundai A-League during the off-season. The headliner was Dario Vidosic, the attacking midfielder and a member of the Qantas Socceroos squad at the 2010 FIFA World Cup.

At 24, Vidosic is in the prime of his career, but after four seasons in Germany he opted to continue his development with Adelaide United in the Hyundai A-League.

In Europe, injury restricted Vidosic's output at clubs such as Nurnberg, Duisberg and Arminia Bielefeld. But the livewire former Roar player – who last played for Australia against Serbia in June – hailed the Reds as the right move to kick-start his career both internationally and domestically.

"Significantly he is an Australian player who has played at a very high level for a strong club in one of the best leagues in Europe," says United coach Rini Coolen.

Significant is the word for the capture of Vidosic who, at his age could've been expected to stay in Europe or try his luck in Asia. He's certainly good enough but in another big tick, the classy Vidosic saw something in the Reds that was special.

"In the end I wanted to go to a club that is playing my style of football," says Vidosic. "I like to attack, I like the ball at my feet and I like to express myself. I felt I didn't have the chance to do that [in Germany].

"I'm really looking forward to being in Australia under a good coach with a good club. We want to set some high ambitions and there are also some personal goals that I want to achieve. Hopefully I can continue with the Qantas Socceroos and help the Reds push for the finals and qualify for the AFC Champions League again."

At Hindmarsh, the Brisbane-raised Vidosic will link up with another Qantas Socceroo in striker Bruce Djite, who returns to his former club after playing for Gold Coast United last season.

And the good news doesn't end there for Adelaide. The club enticed reliable Qantas Socceroo defender Jon McKain from Saudi club football to join their 'Red Revolution'.

The 28-year-old, capped 16 times for the Qantas Socceroos, was duly made Reds' club captain by coach Rini Coolen.

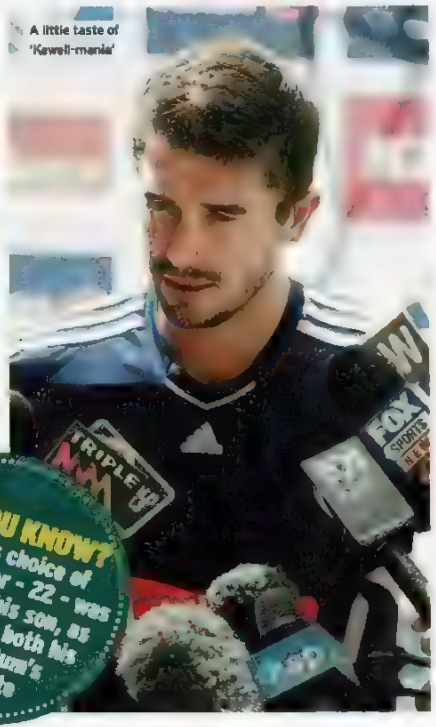
McKain has been impressed that the level of quality in all Hyundai A-League squads has risen another notch in recent seasons.

"I think if you look across every team in the Hyundai A-League, there's quality there," he notes.

He's not wrong. If last season was anything to go by, the standard has risen dramatically over the six seasons with the expectation that this season – the seventh of the Hyundai A-League – will be even better.

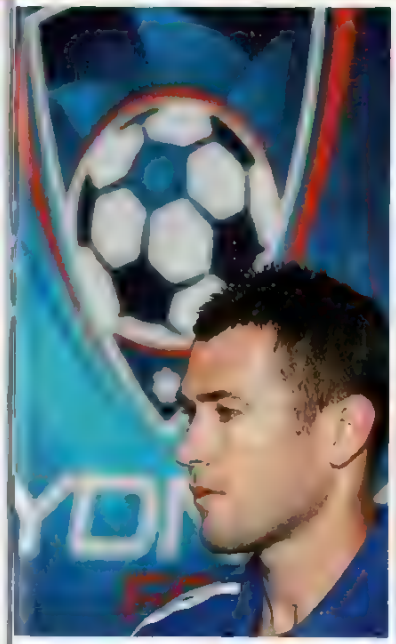
So what does all this exciting transfer activity mean? Clearly it's a thumbs-up for the overall package of the Hyundai A-League: it's a big endorsement for the

Kewell's Qantas Socceroos desire still burns bright



A little taste of 'Kewell-mania'

DID YOU KNOW?
Kewell's choice of shirt number – 22 – was chosen by his son, as the 22nd is both his and his Mum's birth date



Vidosic could have stayed in Europe but he saw something in Adelaide that suited his style of football

Dario Vidosic is a very exciting signing for the Hyundai A-League

stadiums, crowds, coaches, media coverage and fitness and sports science staff. As well, it's an endorsement of standard of play and the potential to play in the showpiece AFC Champions League.

That the overall package has continually improved and is now deemed at a level of professionalism acceptable for such respected names as Kewell and Emerton to want to be part of it just shows just how far the Hyundai A-League has come in only six years. Not bad for a league built from the ground up.

The implications for an evolving national team are three-fold and will be important in some key areas.

Firstly, regular game time for key players is always a positive for any national team – all four new players are expected to be regulars with their respective Hyundai A-League clubs – as we eye more 2014 FIFA World Cup Asian qualifiers and AFC Asian Cup commitments in the next few years.

Secondly, it means the aforementioned national team players are available to play key games in this confederation and in our time-zone. This addresses one of the biggest challenges: travel time for Qantas Socceroos based in Europe.

And thirdly, increasingly professional environments at Hyundai A-League clubs and advances in sports medicine in Australia allow players to manage their bodies and recovery periods as well as at any club in the world. In the modern game this is vital for keeping football engines purring.

As has been demonstrated, Hyundai A-League football is no impediment to the national team. With the selection in the last year of former Hyundai A-League stars Matt McKay (now with Glasgow Rangers) and Robbie Kruse (a recent capture by Fortuna Dusseldorf), it shows that if you're good enough, you'll get your chance, no matter which league you play in.

What we also know is that the new Hyundai A-League season is set to be a fabulous one – quite possibly the best ever – with names such as Kewell, Emerton, Vidosic and McKain new to the mix and adding their own gloss.

And don't forget, continuing on from last season some show-stoppers, such as Brisbane's superstar German Thomas Broich, Sydney FC's Aussies Nick Carle and Terry Antonis and Brazilian striker Bruno Cazarine, new Victory forwards Marco Rojas and Jean Carlos Solorzano and talented Central Coast duo Oliver Bozanic and Mustafa Amini.

As the opening Hyundai A-League kick-off looms, that's quite some cast of footballing talent, we're sure you'll agree. o

ROOS' 'ROAD TO RIO' THE STORY SO FAR

After two games for the Qantas Socceroos it's been an encouraging start in 2014 FIFA World Cup Asian qualifiers

Points in the bank. It's what you want early on in any group situation just to settle the nerves and make a statement of intent - and that's exactly what the Qantas Socceroos have done after two games and two wins in Group D of FIFA 2014 FIFA World Cup Asian qualifiers. Getting those six points in the bag certainly wasn't easy after Thailand proved very much the "Tricky Thais" many said they'd be. Australia's 2-1 victory was hard-earned but was followed by a master-class just days later in Saudi Arabia Josh Kennedy was on target again to make it three goals from two games in the 3-1 victory as the Qantas Socceroos warmed to the task of qualification on the "Road to Rio".

GROUP D RESULTS AND FIXTURES

Date	Home	vs	Away
Sept 2, 2011	**Australia**	**2 - 1**	Thailand
Sept 2, 2011	Oman	0 - 0	Saudi Arabia
Sept 6, 2011	Thailand	3 - 0	Oman
Sept 6, 2011	Saudi Arabia	**1 - 3**	**Australia**
Oct 11, 2011	Thailand	v	Saudi Arabia
Oct 11, 2011	**Australia**	v	Oman
Nov 11, 2011	Saudi Arabia	v	Thailand
Nov 11, 2011	Oman	v	**Australia**
Nov 15, 2011	Thailand	v	**Australia**
Nov 15, 2011	Saudi Arabia	v	Oman
Feb 29, 2012	**Australia**	v	Saudi Arabia
Feb 29, 2012	Oman	v	Thailand

UPDATED GROUP TABLE

POS	TEAM	P	W	D	L	F	A	GD	PTS
1	**Australia**	2	2	0	0	5	2	3	**6**
2	Thailand	2	1	0	1	4	2	2	**3**
3	Saudi Arabia	2	0	1	1	1	3	-2	**1**
4	Oman	2	0	1	1	0	3	-3	**1**

OTHER GROUPS IN 2014 FIFA WORLD CUP ASIAN QUALIFIERS

GROUP A	GROUP B	GROUP C	GROUP D	GROUP E
China PR	Korea Republic	Japan	Australia	IR Iran
Jordan	Kuwait	Uzbekistan	Thailand	Qatar
Iraq	UAE	Tajikistan	Saudi Arabia	Bahrain
Singapore	Lebanon	DPR Korea	Oman	Indonesia

MEET YOUR QANTAS SOCCEROOS

Meet the squad picked by Qantas Socceroos head coach Holger Osieck for tonight's clash

AUSTRALIA

Coach

Holger **Osieck**

Position Head Coach

Appointed in 2010, the German-born coach enjoyed instant success by taking Australia to the AFC Asian Cup 2011 final. Despite losing, the Qantas Socceroos bounced back to defeat Germany and Wales in friendlies. His measured approach and ability to regenerate the side has won him many admirers.

QANTAS SOCCEROOS STAFF

Phil Wolanski Head of Delegation
Holger Osieck Head Coach
Han Berger Technical Director
Gary Moretti Team Manager
Aurelio Vidmar Coach
Robbie Hooker Coach / Recovery
Tony Franken Goalkeeping Coach
Ron Smith Analyst
Dr Mark Jones Doctor
Les Gelis Senior Physio
Kurt Lisle Physiotherapist
Luke Attwell Masseur
Dom Rabsch Equipment Manager
Adam Mark Media Manager
Mark Saliba Security
Joel Freeme Team Administration

Goalkeepers

Adam **Federici**

Age 26 Position Goalkeeper
Club Reading (England)
Appearances 4

"Fedders" made his full Qantas Socceroo debut in 2007 but has been restricted to just four appearances in the national side because of the amazing form of Mark Schwarzer. That said, there's no doubt that at aged 26, Federici has many more years to establish his name in the green and gold. Meanwhile he continues to catch the eye at his English Championship club Reading.

Mark **Schwarzer**

Age 38 Position Goalkeeper
Club Fulham (England)
Appearances 92

The Qantas Socceroos' undisputed No.1, Schwarzer is Australia's most capped men's player. After beginning his European career in Germany, Mark is now into his 15th campaign in English football at EPL side Fulham. Despite being the elder statesman of the squad, Schwarzer is showing no signs of slowing down, recently saying he would like to play in the 2014 FIFA World Cup finals.

Defenders

Sasa **Ognenovski**

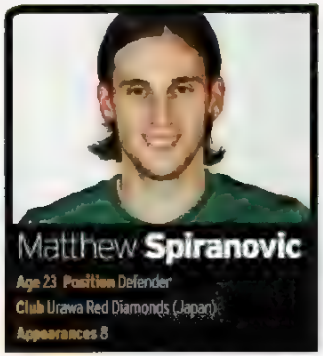
Age 32 **Position** Defender
Club Seongnam Ilhwa Chunma (Korea Republic)
Appearances 11

A star in the Hyundai A-League firstly in Brisbane, then with Adelaide United, the dominating defender's career has blossomed even more since his move to Asia, where he captained his side - and scored - in an AFC Champions League final. He topped a fantastic year off by winning last season's AFC Player of the Year, before debuting in the Qantas Socceroos to round out a fabulous few years.

Rhys **Williams**

Age 23 **Position** Defender
Club Middlesbrough (England)
Appearances 6

A year ago Williams was set for his first ever FIFA World Cup but a persistent groin problem robbed him of his dream. However, after recently resuming his club career at Middlesbrough, he's been winning rave reviews for his great performances. He can play centrally, too, and get forward using an impressive range of skills. Williams' return in 2011 is a huge plus for the Qantas Socceroos.



Matthew **Spiranovic**

Age 23 **Position** Defender
Club Urawa Red Diamonds (Japan)
Appearances 8

Spiranovic is your classic ball-playing central defender and is a star of the future. In 2006, Spiranovic joined FC Nuremberg before moving to one of the biggest Japanese clubs Urawa Reds last year. The defender's performance last month against Thailand showed that he's ready to take the next step in his international career after injuries have robbed him of game-time in the past

Luke Wilkshire gets stuck in for the Qantas Socceroos

Lucas has been in dominating form during this campaign

Defenders

Luke **Wilkshire**

Age 30 **Position** Defender
Club Dinamo Moscow (Russia)
Appearances 62

Wilkshire has become one of the first players on Holger Osieck's team-sheet. He's got a little bit of everything - works hard, can attack and defend and has a big heart. Wollongong-born "Wilko" began his Euro career in England with Middlesbrough and Bristol City, before a spell in Holland with FC Twente. He moved to Dinamo Moscow and has featured regularly since signing in 2008.

Michael **Zullo**

Age 22 **Position** Defender
Club FC Utrecht (Holland)
Appearances 6

Another Hyundai A-League product who is making his way in European football. Along with Robbie Kruse, the pair ripped it up at Roar between 2007-2010, which set him up for a move to FC Utrecht last year. A converted left winger, Zullo is making the most of his new role on the left side of defence, a position he's begun to play with his Dutch Eredivisie club too

Lucas **Neill**

Age 33 **Position** Defender
Club Al Jazira (UAE)
Appearances 75

One of Australia's most recognisable stars, Neill recently switched from the Turkish league to UAE club Al Jazira. Neill made his Qantas Socceroos debut in 1996 and he has established himself as our defensive linchpin and leader. His performances at the AFC Asian Cup 2011 and in friendlies this year are proof that he's still at the top of his game. An inspiration and a top-class defender

Midfielders

Brett Holman

Age 27 **Position** Midfielder
Club AZ Alkmaar (Holland)
Appearances 50

A sensational last 12 months has taken Holman's green and gold career to another level. He was always hugely important to the team with his willingness to do the hard yards and now after a flurry of goals, including two at the 2010 FIFA World Cup, he's shaping as one of the key men on the "Road to Rio". What's more, the Sydney-sider continues to find the target regularly for his Eredivisie club.

Mile Jedinak

Age 27 **Position** Midfielder
Club Crystal Palace (England)
Appearances 28

Jedinak's AFC Asian Cup 2011 was a breakthrough tournament for the midfielder, with a brace of goals at crucial times and a dominant series of displays. The former Hyundai A-League star has played in the Turkish league but is now developing his game with Crystal Palace under former Qantas Socceroo Tony Popovic, who is an assistant at the London club.

Brett Holman has just reached his 50th cap milestone for the national team

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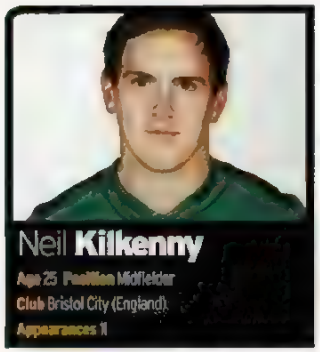
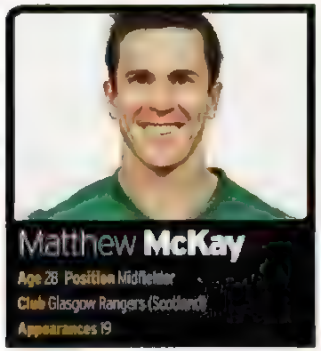
Midfielders



Neil **Kilkenny**

Age 25 **Position** Midfielder
Club Bristol City (England)
Appearances 11

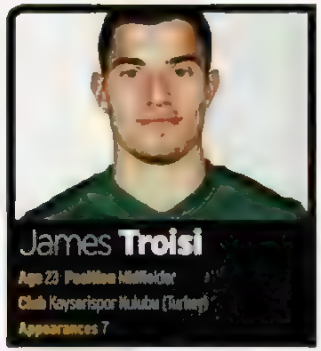
Kilkenny, now with Bristol City, is building his career in England after successful spells with Leeds United and Birmingham City. For the green and gold, he debuted in 2006 and is now in a good position to cement his place after being picked in the AFC Asian Cup 2011 squad. Kilkenny combines work-rate with an excellent technical ability which he developed as an apprentice at Arsenal.



Matthew **McKay**

Age 28 **Position** Midfielder
Club Glasgow Rangers (Scotland)
Appearances 19

One of the feel-good stories of Australia's AFC Asian Cup 2011 campaign, McKay has blossomed under Osieck, slotting into the team like a veteran and adding a new dimension to the midfield. With his prodigious work-rate and excellent link-play, the Roar hero was recently signed by Glasgow Rangers after he gained his clearance to play for the Scottish giants in the SPL.



James **Troisi**

Age 23 **Position** Midfielder
Club Kayserispor Kulubu (Turkey)
Appearances 7

An Adelaide product, Troisi has been overseas for his entire senior career. He began at England's Newcastle United where he played in the reserves and was on the fringes of the first team before a move to Turkey came up. He plied his trade at Gençlerbirligi, before catching the eye of Kayserispor after banging in a hat-trick against them playing for Gençler

Midfielders

Carl **Valeri**

Age 27 **Position** Midfielder
Club US Sassuolo Calcio (Italy)
Appearances 41

Canberra born Valeri continues to refine his game in Italy and is delivering big-time in the Qantas Socceroos midfield. The defensive midfielder has represented Australia at all levels and made his debut for the green and gold in March 2007. Valeri was signed by Inter Milan in 2004, who loaned him out to other clubs to gain experience, before he signed with US Sassuolo in 2010.

Canberra-born Roo Carl Valeri against Thailand last month

Appearance stats as at Oct 7 Friendly against Malaysia

Strikers

Tim **Cahill**

Age 31 **Position** Striker
Club Everton (England)
Appearances 55

Australia's first ever World Cup goal-scorer - who could forget those last minute strikes against Japan in Kaiserslautern? - Cahill is now played predominantly as a striker by coach Osieck, such is his ability to find the net in big games. One of the few Aussies left in the Barclays English Premier League, Tim is arguably as valuable to Everton's fortunes as he is to the green and gold's. Dead-set legend.

Robbie **Kruse**

Age 23 **Position** Striker
Club Fortuna Dusseldorf (Germany)
Appearances 10

This year has been Kruse's after the lightning quick striker was named in the AFC Asian Cup squad last January. It was just reward for some sparkling displays at Melbourne Victory that earnt him a deal with German club Fortuna Dusseldorf. In June he headed to Germany but has been part of Qantas Socceroos squads ever since including playing against Thailand last month as a sub.

Josh **Kennedy**

Age 29 **Position** Striker
Club Nagoya Grampus (Japan)
Appearances 26

Kennedy is currently the leading scorer in the J-League with powerhouse Nagoya Grampus. Coached by former playing great Dragan Stojkovic, the tall centre forward has made a splash in Japan since joining his club in 2009, following almost seven years in the German leagues. Kennedy is in super form after three goals in our opening two matches of the current 2014 FIFA World Cup Asian qualifiers.

Strikers

Adam **Sarota**

Age 22 **Position** Striker
Club FC Utrecht (Holland)
Appearances 1

Sarota was probably the least heralded of the Brisbane Roar trio - along with Tommy Oar and Michael Zullo - to sign with FC Utrecht last season, but he's made the biggest impact at the Eredivisie club so far. A midfielder by trade, Sarota can get into more advanced positions and use his skill on the ball to link-up with the forwards. Another player who has a bright future ahead of them

Alex **Brosque**

Age 27 **Position** Striker
Club Shimizu S-Pulse (Japan)
Appearances 7

Brosque is in fantastic form right now. The 27-year-old has enjoyed a very successful first season in Japan with goals galore at Shimizu. He also scored the winner for the Qantas Socceroos against Thailand last month. It's this form and his versatility - he can lead the line or play just in behind in a 4-3-3 - that makes the ex-Sydney FC star such a valuable asset for the national team

AUSTRALIA V OMAN

Fill in numbers as line-ups are announced

DEFENDERS

- Lucas **Neill**
- Matthew **Spiranovic**
- Luke **Wilkshire**
- Rhys **Williams**
- Sasa **Ognenovski**
- Michael **Zullo**

FORWARDS

- Tim **Cahill**
- Josh **Kennedy**
- Robbie **Kruse**
- Adam **Sarota**
- Alex **Brosque**

GOALKEEPERS

- [illegible] **Federici**
- [illegible] **Schwarzer**

MIDFIELDERS

- Matthew **McKay**
- James **Troisi**
- Brett **Holman**
- Mile **Jedinak**
- Carl **Valeri**
- Neil **Kilkenny**

GOALSCORERS

DEFENDERS

- Al Balushi Mohammed Abdullah Mubarak
- Al Farsi Rashid Juma Mubarak
- Jaber Mohammed Saghayar Al Owaisi
- Mohammed Saleh Ali Al-Muslaimi
- Abdul Rahman Saleh Khalfan Al Alawi

FORWARDS

- Al Mukhaini Said Suhail Juma
- Al Ghefaini Hassan Yousuf Jadhafar
- Ahmed Al Sulaiman Al Hosni
- Hashim Saleh Mohammed
- Al Houshi Nasser Rabia Suwaidan
- Yaqoob Abdul Karim Salim Al-Qasmi

MIDFIELDERS

- Qasim Said Sanjoor Hardan
- Bait Doorbeen Fawzi Bashir Rajab
- Al Mahajiri Ahmed Mubarak Obaid
- Al Mukhaini Ahmed Hadid Thuwaini
- Al-Maashari Juma Darwish Juma
- Nasser Sulaiman Abdullah Al Ali
- Al-Farsi Eid Mohammed Eid
- Al Hadhri Hussain Ali Farah
- Ismail Sulaiman Ashoor Al-Ajmi

GOALKEEPERS

- Al Habsi Ali Abdullah Hari
- Faiyz Issa Khaloof Al Rusheidi
- Al Hooti Mohammed Hawaidi Sulaiman

GOALSCORERS

OMAN

Like the Aussies, Oman's last line of defence is rock solid. But there's more to the 2009 Gulf Cup winners than English Premier League star Ali Al-Habsi

Words Adam Gemard

It's encouraging to see [illegible] represented in the highest echelons of European football's club competitions. Players from Japan, South Korea, Iran and Australia proudly fly the flag in some of the biggest European leagues. You can also add to that list Oman, who have their own poster boy in Muscat-born shot-stopper Ali Al-Habsi. Al-Habsi has done the hard yards in the tough English Premier League. Although he joined Bolton in 2006, with Jussi Jaaskelainen [illegible] as club number one, the lad himself made [illegible] by the Trotters.

In [illegible] season as Wigan relegated to [illegible] at Tottenham and kept eight English Premier League clean sheets in all, including a fabulous performance on the final day of the season as the Latics avoided relegation [illegible] Arsenal's Stadium.

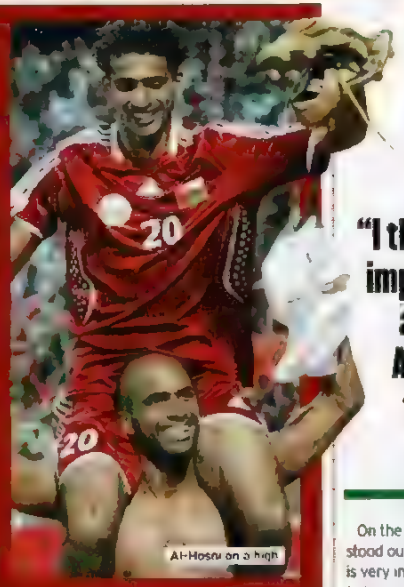
[illegible] Martinez's side following last season's loan spell – where he also won the club's Player of the Year Award – the big guy's profile is increasing. And as a keeper, the 29-year-old could remain in the English Premier League spotlight for many years to come as Oman football's most high-profile footballer. And Oman deserves a bit of focus. And respect.

Why? Well, aside from Al-Habsi's feats, of the three games Oman have played against the Qantas Socceroos it proves an opponent that, despite being a bit of a football mystery to most fans in this country, is extremely difficult to beat.

All three clashes were [illegible] [illegible] unlucky not to [illegible] on [illegible].

So, history shows [illegible] [illegible] [illegible]

Bashir in motion


Al-Hosni on a high

DID YOU KNOW? In their first official international in 1965, Oman were beaten 15-0 by Sudan!

Watch out for...

Fawzi Bashir, midfielder

Amad Al-Hosni, striker

Aussie fans will remember this exciting

At Melbourne's Docklands in an AFC Asian Cup 2011 qualifier, the Qantas Socceroos talisman slid in at the far post for the decisive goal in another clash the Omanis were lucky not to get anything from.

In the return leg a month later Oman had a golden chance to break the hoodoo of the green and gold. With the Qantas Socceroos down a goal and a man after 15 minutes, Oman could have - and perhaps should have - gone on and won.

But Mark Schwarzer was in fine form, while Luke Wilkshire and Brett Emerton did the business at the other end to stun the home side at the Sultan Qaboos Stadium. Another win for the Aussies, this time a gutsy 2-1 win.

On the bench that night was striker Alex Brosque, who now plies his trade in the J-League with Shimizu S-Pulse.

"Looking back at that game it was incredible," says Brosque. "The [hot] conditions, and going down to ten men early on - there was even a laser beam being pointed at some of the boys which was also quite disruptive.

"And I think a cracker was thrown onto the pitch. So it wasn't easy for us. There was a whole heap going on in that game," he recalls with a laugh.

"I think a goalkeeper is important to any team and for Oman to have Al-Habsi in England's top flight definitely helps them a lot"

On the park it was goalkeeper Al-Habsi who stood out for Brosque. "I think a goalkeeper is very important to any team and for Oman to have a player like Ali play in the English Premier League, he definitely helps a lot. He has a real presence back there which is very important."

Although Al-Habsi is virtually the only Omani player known to fans in this country, Brosque believes there is a hidden quality with Oman still not to be taken lightly.

"All the Asian countries, especially in the early stages, are sort of unknown and they have a lot of players who come out and do well, players that you didn't expect to see do well. So it's very hard to predict exactly how they are going to come out against you.

"And another reason why they have done well against us is they are definitely a good footballing team," Brosque adds. "Against Australia they can play without being expected to win. They can pretty much throw everything at you and not have too much to worry about. If they lose, well it's kind of expected and if they win it's a massive bonus. So they might as well come out and play, and from what we've seen over the last four years when we've played against them, they've got good enough players to be a good team."

So you can see why many observers in Australia are reluctant to point to this game as an easy three points, with Oman desperate to get their current campaign back on track.

That said, it's fair to say Omani football is somewhat of a mystery to most fans in this country. Clubs such as Dohfar FC may be institutions back at home, but outside of the Sultanate little is known of them. Omani clubs haven't made any sort of impact in the region's premier competition - the AFC Champions League - either.

In fact, there are only 43 clubs that fall under the jurisdiction of the local FA, with local leagues only kicking off in 1971. Seven years later the first Omani Football Association, under the chairmanship of the late His Highness Sayyid Faisal bin Ali Al Said was formed as they were also accepted into FIFA.

And not having ever qualified for a FIFA World Cup hasn't helped broaden Al-Ahmar's ("The Red") appeal in the international arena.

What's more, after catching the eye in 2007, you would've noticed the Omanis were missing from January's AFC Asian Cup.

Drawn in Australia's group for the qualification phase for Qatar 2011, Oman were edged out for second spot by Kuwait (despite actually beating the Kuwaitis 1-0 away but a home 0-0 result against bottom-placed Indonesia and the 2-1 loss against Australia proving costly in the end).

Al Ahmar finished just a point behind their Gulf rivals, with the Qantas Socceroos topping a difficult group.

However, occasionally there has been a highlight for Oman on the international scene, such as fourth place at the FIFA U-20 World Cup in 1995. And great players of recent times include Hani Al-Dhabit ▸

The Omanis will be desperate for points tonight

Al-Habsi and Cahill have met in England

Oman's big man: Ali Al-Habsi

Oman's undisputed number one Ali Al-Habsi has taken a somewhat unusual road to Wigan's DW Stadium.

The commanding 194-cm keeper (full name Ali Abdullah Harib Al-Habsi) began his career with hometown club Al-Midhaibi. Signed as 17-year-old, he spent four years at the club making over 50 appearances before moving to Muscat-based Al-Nasr.

With ambition backed up by talent, he spent a year with the club before making a big move to Scandinavia. He joined Lyn, a well-known club in Norway, and stayed at the Oslo-based outfit for three seasons.

Sixty two appearances later and a regular in the national team by this stage, Al-Habsi made his dream move to England and Bolton Wanderers. He paid his dues with the Trotters, learning from one of the best in the business Icelandic star Jussi Jaaskelainen.

The big Omani did catch the eye when called upon, such as during Bolton's clash with Bayern Munich in the UEFA Cup in 2007. Yet as any keeper will tell you, it's games they need - not bench-warming. With this in mind, a loan move last season to Wigan was a gamble that paid off for both player and club. The Omani's 34 appearances were a big reason why the Latics avoided relegation and he subsequently won the club's Player of the Year Award for his efforts.

Along the way he's achieved a number of other milestones and awards including a four-time winner of Best Keeper Award at the Gulf Cup, Arab Keeper of the Year and Norwegian Keeper of the Year in 2004. And like Mark Schwarzer, Al-Habsi could reach the magical 100 cap mark if he keeps up his great form. At just 29 years old, the big guy with the big smile is eying a very happy future at the DW stadium and with his beloved Omani national team.

Joy at winning the Gulf Cup in 2009

Al-Habsi flies the flag for Omani football

Iranian's female fans keep a close eye on their heroes

Fawzi Bashir in action against Thailand

The Thailand game showed there's no easy games and Oman will prove no different

who stunned many observers by becoming the world's highest scorer in international matches back in the year 2001.

On the regional scene, Oman's 2009 Gulf Cup triumph was their biggest success in recent history.

The victory – on home soil too – sparked wild celebrations after Oman managed to keep a clean sheet throughout the Cup thanks to Al-Habsi (though the victory was tempered by news that one of the Sultanate's greatest ever footballers, 1980s star Ghulam Khamis, had died not long before the Cup).

As for coaches, in 2007, Oman were guided by Argentine Gabriel Calderon, in 2009 it was the feisty Claude LeRoy, while these days it's Paul Le Guen. The Frenchman is a former Ligue 1 winner with Lyon – taking them to three straight titles – though his spells at PSG and Glasgow Rangers were less successful than his Lyon glory days.

But that didn't stop him from moving up to the international arena. At the 2010 FIFA World Cup he was in charge of Cameroon – however they ended bottom of their group.

So, Le Guen will have plenty to prove with his latest appointment. In fact it's been a quite eventful campaign to date beginning in second round 2014 FIFA World Cup Asian qualifiers with a 2-0 home victory over Myanmar.

Amad Al-Hosni and Ismail Al Ajmi were on target to give Al Ahmar a cushion going into the second leg away. However the match turned nasty and was abandoned shortly before half-time due to crowd trouble.

After Al Hosni had again got on the score-sheet, Myanmar fans began throwing rocks and bottles in protest at referee Ryuji Sato's awarding of a 39th minute penalty, which was successfully converted by Al Ajmi to make it 2-0 on the day.

The local supporters ignored Myanmar Football Federation President's Zaw appeal for calm prompting the abandonment of the match with Oman winning 2-0 on the night and 4-0 on aggregate.

As a result, Oman advanced directly to the current third round 2014 FIFA World Cup Asian qualifiers, though it's been a tough start for the boys in red with just one point from their opening two encounters.

A 0-0 home draw with Saudi Arabia opened their group phase. But underlining the mantra that you have to win your home games in group football as a buffer, the Omanis were promptly beaten by a rampant Thai side 3-0 in Bangkok. It's left them desperate for points going into tonight's clash against the unbeaten Aussies on six points.

"I think Oman were a lot stronger a few years ago than they are currently," notes Jason Dasey, host and executive producer of football on Asia's Astro SuperSport.

"Australia were lucky to scrape out a draw with them in the 2007 Asian Cup. A few players from that squad are missing.

"Australia struggled against them because their pace and movement exposed them. We mistakenly thought that we were good enough to beat teams like Oman without a disciplined approach on and off the pitch."

Up until four years ago, the Qantas Socceroos had never played Oman. Now, they are set to play them tonight for a fourth time, with a fifth clash away next month.

And last month's match against Thailand in Brisbane was a timely reminder that there are few easy games in international football and based on the three games so far against Oman, this will be another very tough night at the office for the Qantas Socceroos. ●

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OMAN 1 - AUSTRALIA 2

DATE: NOVEMBER 14, 2009 WHERE: SULTAN QABOOS SPORTS COMPLEX, MUSCAT COMPETITION: AFC ASIAN CUP 2011 QUALIFIER

Occasionally, winning performances are more about character and grit than tactics and silky skills. This was one of those nights. The Qantas Socceroos put on a memorable display of backs-to-the-wall determination in Muscat to come from behind with ten men to snatch a valuable 2-1 victory.

Playing without a red-carded Rhys Williams, for 75 minutes, the Aussies held out and won thanks to some desperate defending in front of Mark Schwarzer and two well-taken goals.

An even start to the game went pear-shaped on 15 minutes. Qasim Saeed's burst down the right set up an Omani attacking raid, which led to Williams receiving his marching orders after he clattered into Fawzi Basheer. Khalifa Ayil strode up to take the resulting spot-kick, and after his initial effort was parried by Schwarzer, he slotted it home. A boil-over loomed with Oman looking increasingly confident of taking the points.

However, Pim Verbeek's Aussies weren't done just yet. On the stroke of half-time, Luke Wilkshire picked the perfect moment to open his account with the national team. Great lead-up play from Mark Bresciano helped set up the leveller and the teams went into the break locked at 1-1.

In the second period Oman had a number of chances to win the game. Imad Al Hosni had two chances scrambled clear just before the hour – the first cleared by Wilkshire off the line, and the second saved by Schwarzer, who was in great form behind a defence that was increasingly under the pump.

With a second goal seemingly only a matter of time, Verbeek rang the changes. Cahill and Bresciano were withdrawn as Brett Holman and Carney came on. It proved an effective move, with Carney instrumental in the game's decisive moment when Brett Emerton nabbed a priceless winner in the final ten minutes.

The indefatigable Wilkshire found Carney down the left and he in turn cleverly set-up Emerton, who drilled the ball low on the half volley past the impressive Ali Al-Habsi.

The Omanis were devastated. They had a golden opportunity to finally win a game against the Qantas Socceroos but they blew their lines. A ten-man green and gold put on a master-class of disciplined tactical football and opportunism to hold on for a massive three points on the road.

This was one of the great performances by the national team in recent years. ●

AUSTRALIA'S LINE-UP

Mark Schwarzer, Lucas Neill, Craig Moore, Scott Chipperfield, Rhys Williams (red card 15), Tim Cahill (Brett Holman 67), Jason Culina, Brett Emerton, Harry Kewell (Patrick Kisnorbo 89), Mark Bresciano (David Carney 67), Luke Wilkshire

ACTION REPLAY: OMAN

"This is a new era for the national team"

Qantas Socceroo James Troisi on Turkish early morning wake-up calls and making the grade with the green and gold

Words Tarquin Taylor **Portrait** Cameron Grayson

In recent years Turkey has been a common hunting ground for Qantas Socceroos. At one point Lucas Neill, Harry Kewell, Mile Jedinak, Bruce Djite, Michael Petkovic, Nick Carle and James Troisi all plied their trade in the passionate Turkish league. Currently just the latter is left.

Adelaide-born Troisi, who spent several years as a youngster at Barclays English Premier League side Newcastle United with limited first-team chances, is hoping that he can use this transition period for the Qantas Socceroos as an opportunity to push for a place during the upcoming FIFA World Cup qualifications across the region in the next few months.

After moving to Turkish side Genclerbirligi in 2008, Troisi grabbed his first career hat-trick in January 2009, against 2008 Turkish Cup winners Kayserispor. His rivals on the day liked what they saw and signed the young Aussie in the next closed season.

While his time at Kayserispor has been plagued with injury, after a solid pre-season with no problems, the 23-year-old is confident he can help his side, who spent the first half of last season near the summit of the league before finishing sixth, to European qualification this time around.

Troisi has also found favour with Qantas Socceroo coach Holger Osieck, who selected him for June's friendly with New Zealand in Troisi's hometown Adelaide.

A decent display, capped by a penalty conversion, would have done Troisi's future chances no harm. While the 2014 FIFA World Cup Asian qualifiers, and then Brazil 2014, all offer young Aussie players the ultimate carrot, it will not be easy to claim a spot. And there are a few players keen to make a spot in the front-line their own. Troisi will need to stay fit and be firing to play a part in Holger's plans.

We spoke to Troisi from Turkey about making the international grade, the match-fixing scandal which has delayed the start of the Turkish season and 5am wake-up calls from the local mosque!

You have now called Turkey home for the past three years. How is life treating you there? Anything in particular you enjoy about the country?

It is completely different to most places in the world. It took a little time to settle in, but now I am used to it. It makes you grow as a person as it can be a tough place to live, but I love the weather and the food is really good too. I can't complain too much.

How is it "completely different to most places" as you mentioned?

It is a Muslim country and that takes a while to get used to. They have to pray five times a day, so there are mosques within walking distance of most houses. The mosques play music five times a day, the first time at 5am in the morning and then lastly at 10pm at night. I have got used to that, but it did take a while!

The Turkish season was due to start in August, before a match-fixing scandal pushed the start date to September. How has that affected preparations this pre-season?

It is frustrating. Putting the season back a month means we had a 12-week pre-season. We were back on 27 June for training and the match-fixing scandal did not surface until ▸

Getting a feel of the main man Messi.

Playing with striking legend Michael Owen

3 July. It is just about maintaining our fitness and making sure we do not over do it. We had some extra friendly games to get us ready too.

What has been the reaction of the passionate Turkish fans over the delay?
Most of the stuff has been in Istanbul as it has centered on Fenerbahce. We went away on camp so we did not hear much about it. It was still a pretty crazy time, with people taken into jail including a club president!

Your side Kayserispor were sixth last season. How satisfied were the team with that?
We were doing really well at one point. Going into the mid-season break at the end of December we were second. The second half of the season was a big disappointment, we lost five or six games in a row. That was pretty crazy.

What is the target this season? Breaking into a European qualification place?
Considering we were second last season and the season before we spent time in first position, then yes we should be aiming to at least make Europe this season.

How about you personally, how did you go last season?
I had an operation on my groin and I was out for the first four or five months of the season.

"Holger has given the youngsters an opportunity... There are definitely spots for grabs in the squad"

I got back and played three or four, played well, but then picked up another injury and returned to Australia for an operation. I am fit now, so hopefully I can contribute more this season.

You spent a few years on the fringes of Premier League football with Newcastle United – how do you reflect on that time?
It was great – the players I trained and played with everyday were amazing. I was there for four and a half years but as a youngster it was very difficult to break into the first team. You have big name players who have been bought for big money in front of you, so it was difficult for young players like myself to get a gig. I could have stayed there but I felt it was best for me to move elsewhere and start playing on a more regular basis.

You're from Adelaide originally, do you still keep tabs on their Hyundai A-League side? Would that be the most likely destination if you returned to the league?
That is still a long, long way off at the moment. Hopefully I have a few more years overseas yet. I try and stay in touch with what is happening. We do not get much A-League coverage over here, so I go on the internet to see what is happening. As for Adelaide, they have recruited some very good players and they will do well this season.

It is all change for the Qantas Socceroos at the moment and there seems like a real opportunity to push for a striker spot – how much of an extra motivation is that for you?
Of course – it is a new era. It is a chance for the youngsters to start showing what they can do. The coach [Holger Osieck] is giving us a chance. I did not get much of a chance under former coach Pim [Verbeek], which was unfortunate. So far things have been good under Holger and he has given me and some of the other youngsters an opportunity. There are definitely spots up for grabs in the squad.

Is that out-and-out striker role your preferred Qantas Socceroo position? Or would you rather be on the wing?
My preferred position is in the centre as a striker. I am playing as more of an attacking midfielder at my club. While the central role is ideal for me, I just want to be out on the park, so it is not a problem if I have to play out wide. Ideally I would like to play as the second striker.

While there is an opportunity for a spot in the Qantas Socceroos, there is also plenty of competition with Kennedy, McDonald, Kruse, Rukavytsya, Leckie...
We need good players and you want to play with good players. There is plenty of competition and that keeps everyone on their toes. There is no chance of getting comfortable in the team as there are others vying for your spot.

You got your first Qantas Socceroos' goal from the spot against New Zealand in June – how was that?
It was great to be back home and scoring in front of my family and friends. Overall it was just great being back playing for the Socceroos and being given an opportunity.

We also did not recognise you at first – what happened to the long locks?!
When I got to Turkey it was really hot! When I was in England it was never sunny and always raining and cold. When I got to Turkey my hair was really long so I needed a bit of a change.

Has it helped your play at all? Are you now more aerodynamic?!
[Laughs] Not really! I did not mind the long hair so it might come back one day, but for now I will keep it short!

In the current phase of 2014 FIFA World Cup Asian qualifiers, what do you make of our opponents Oman, Saudi Arabia and Thailand?
It is always difficult with these games, with the conditions and the travel. On paper we have the better players, but there are other factors which make it more difficult. We will see how it goes, but if we take it seriously I am confident.

It is a lengthy FIFA World Cup qualification process, how will your club react to the travel you will need to potentially undertake?
I have not spoken to them about it yet. It all comes under FIFA dates, but we will have to see how it goes. They might get a little bit funny, but I will take it as it comes. Our coach [Shota Arveladze] was an international player, so he will understand.

Is your future long-term in Turkey or is there somewhere else on the radar?
You are always striving for bigger and better things and to go as high as you can. I still have two years left on my deal here, but football is crazy and you never know what will happen. The most important thing for me is that I'm back playing.

As for the 2014 FIFA World Cup in Brazil – how much does that cross your mind or work as a motivation for you?
It is a nice feeling, but I need to concentrate on staying fit and playing. If I can do that I give myself a chance of being involved with the national team. If I get my opportunity, then I have to take it. ●

Training on the Gold Coast for the Qantas Socceroos.

James Troisi is wearing a Nike Windrunner RRP $100 and Nike Air Max 90 trainers RRP $180. For Nike stockist information, ring 1300 656 453.

THE BIG PICTURE

ROOS SIZZLE IN SAUDI ARABIA

MIDDLE-EAST MASTER-CLASS IN 3-1 WIN

Just days after defeating Thailand in Brisbane, the Qantas Socceroos were in Saudi Arabia and put on a master-class in the heat of Dammam to win 3-1 and maintain a 100% record in 2014 FIFA World Cup Asian qualifiers. In Australia's second group game there were goals to Josh Kennedy (two) and Luke Wilkshire on a stellar night for the Roos in Saudi.

LEGENDS

ALEX TOBIN

Back in the day Alex Tobin was a colossus for the Qantas Socceroos - he even played against the great Diego Maradona in FIFA World Cup qualifiers

Words Aidan Ormond

Spend a little time with a Qantas Socceroo and you'll hear some cracking stories, especially if that player is Alex Tobin, a veteran of 87 'A' appearances who played against the likes of Diego Maradona, Jurgen Klinsmann and Eric Cantona during an illustrious 11-year career.

And while Tobin experienced heartbreak in three FIFA World Cup qualifying campaigns, the powerful central defender did represent Australia at an Olympics, captained his country on 30 occasions and scored on debut in his hometown Adelaide (his first goal in senior football no less!).

After the curtain came down on his national team career in 1999, Tobin received a Medal of the Order of Australia (OAM) for his services to football as a player and with the PFA. He was also inducted into the FFA's Hall of Champions in 2007 - the highest accolade an Australian player can receive.

His career in the Qantas Socceroos was built on reliability and consistency. Interestingly, his years keeping out the world's best attackers encompassed a period in the national team that moved away from a home-based to an overseas-based national team.

At club level, he played a record 522 NSL games over a 20-year span including five Grand Finals and two Joe Marston medals. He won three NSL championships and two national cup titles.

Yet despite only playing for Australian clubs - mainly Adelaide City, but later Sydney clubs Parramatta Power and Northern Spirit - Tobin retained his spot in the heart of the Aussie defence. He was even made captain by former Qantas Socceroos coach Terry Venables, such was the high regard he was held in by the former England, Spurs and Barcelona boss.

"It was an honour to be named captain, particularly by Terry, who I learned so much from," says Tobin. "He was a very good man manger, understood his players well and had such a good rapport. He was thorough and knowledgeable too. He was one of the best."

Tobin began playing for the national team in 1988, turning out for a full Qantas side that competed in the Seoul Olympics (last tournament without an age restriction imposed on teams).

LEGENDS: ALEX TOBIN

Tobin came up against Diego Maradona, Jurgen Klinsmann and Eric Cantona during his illustrious 11 year career

Shackling Christian Vieri during an All-Star game in Sydney in 1999

Teaching Harry a thing or two

Happy times before a "cruel" ending against Iran

It made a lasting impression. "That Olympics in 1988, it was amazing to see the likes of Romario and Paolo Maldini play in that tournament," he recalls, of his experience as an up-and-coming 22 year-old. "And then to see athletes like Carl Lewis and 'Flo-Jo' wandering around the Olympic Village - that's what's special about the Olympics. You see world class athletes right on your doorstep."

It prepared him for what was to come in 1993. A certain Diego Maradona famously came out of retirement to reinvigorate Argentina's failing campaign. It wasn't good news for the Qantas Socceroos who were drawn with them in a play-off.

The former world champions edged the Aussies over two legs (a 1-1 draw in Sydney and a 1-0 loss in South America), but the sideshow of Maradona coming out of retirement and the two exciting games that gripped the nation remain vivid in Tobin's memory.

"Playing in that series of games, with a World Cup place at stake, Maradona was playing and over there at the River Plate stadium, it was an unbelievable experience. You'd just see this wave of 70,000 or so fans in the stands over there and they never stopped chanting and jumping up and down all game.

"The wind swirled around with paper floating everywhere, and it was so loud, you couldn't communicate with each other on the park. It was like a rock concert!"

Maradona of course was the star of the show and just being in the great man's slipstream was something to behold, Tobin remembers.

"Wadey [Paul Wade] was man-marking him, so that was a night to remember for him, but for us we had to track runners closely because he could get the ball to them with ease. With Maradona you just never knew what he would do and so you had to adjust your thinking in terms of intercepting forward runs.

"He once had his back to a player but flicked the ball over his shoulder to a team-mate, I think to Batistuta. It was that sort of night. You had to change the way you thought about tactics and marking and tracking runners.

"It was amazing just seeing how the other Argentine players would react to him [Maradona]. He was like a deity figure and they were practically paying homage to the great man.

"We were on the same plane as the Argentina side going over there and it was something very special to see at close quarters, to see someone beyond a rock star. A living legend, I guess.

"And even after the game the players all ended up in the same night club... and as I recall Maradona paid for everything. I don't remember ever putting my hand in my pocket for a thing that night!"

Despite all the factors going against the Qantas Socceroos, it was just a single goal - and a deflected one off Tobin's leg - that saw the favourites through.

Tobin was also part of the heartbreak kids of 1997, when Iran qualified for the 1998 FIFA World Cup after a dramatic 2-2 draw in a second leg of the final phase of qualification in Melbourne.

"The game can be cruel. It's part of its appeal that the better team on the day doesn't always win," he says. "And maybe it hurt even more given how superior we were on the day against Iran. It was harder to deal with in some ways than the loss to Argentina.

"It was an amazingly sunken feeling after the game from all concerned. It's not something I'll ever forget... a crushing loss."

Qualification aside, playing against the likes of Christian Vieri and Jurgen Klinsmann in an All-Stars game in Sydney was something Tobin remembers fondly. He also locked horns against a French team in the Kirin Cup in 1994 that included Eric Cantona and David Ginola.

"When you open your eyes, you will be healed"

Now as FNSW technical director Tobin wants to help foster the next generation of players

Great memories all but Tobin's focus was always on the FIFA World Cup qualifying campaigns (he was also on the bench in 1989 against Israel).

He correctly points out that FIFA World Cup qualification back then was much more difficult, as there were fewer games than the group stage scenario we now face.

"These were one-off games, which aren't the perfect environment to qualify. We had our chances against Argentina and it was close against one helluva team.

"It all makes Australia now being in Asia a massive benefit."

Over the last couple of decades Tobin has involved himself with clubs and states in development roles and elite youth programs. He believes this has given him an insight into fundamental issues that need addressing.

Now, as Football NSW technical director, Tobin wants to make a contribution in helping foster the next generation. He is working closely with FFA technical director Han Berger to make "fundamental" changes to improve NSW football's coaches and coaching system.

Tobin was appointed to the key role earlier this year and given the size and numbers of players in the state, he has a huge responsibility in shaping its technical direction at a vital time in the game's overall development.

Initially the 45-year-old wants to see a better coaching culture which he hopes will have positive spin-offs down the track.

"Technical improvement is vital," he says. "This has been recognised for some time in every state and nationally.

"In terms of key goals, there are too many to list but one in particular will ultimately produce others and that is coach education," he says. "Better coaches, better accredited coaches and an ongoing commitment to the education process will produce more and more players of technical and tactical excellence."

Tobin is happy to lean on the experience of Berger in helping drive his vision. Currently, all state member federations' technical directors answer to Berger in terms of policy direction and Tobin sees this as a big plus.

"I am fortunate to have Han residing in NSW and I can utilize his expertise whenever he is able. We've already been in close contact regarding the road that I'd like NSW to take."

'Tobes' file

Full name: Alexander Hugh Tobin
Born: November 3, 1965
Birthplace: Adelaide
Qantas Socceroos: 87 A appearances (30 as captain)
Debut: 1988
Final Game: 1999
Clubs: Adelaide City, Parramatta Power and Northern Spirit
Currently: Football NSW technical director

"Coach education is vital, as is talent ID and the creation of a best practice learning environment for our players," adds Tobin, an AFC/FFA 'A' licence holder.

"My experiences highlighted to me at a young age how different coaching at youth level was to senior level, and I believe that, to this day, we still have major issues with our coaching culture in this regard."

Refreshingly too is the former Australian captain's acceptance that technical development encompasses both male and female. The work done in NSW in developing and directing girls towards NSWIS and Westfield W-League was reflected in 12 NSW girls being involved in the recent FIFA Women's World Cup, including rising star Caitlin Foord, named Best Young Player by FIFA's technical study group in Germany.

"There is a platform there that we can all work to improve," adds Tobin.

"We need also to create opportunities for increasing number of girls joining football."

If any of these players coming through under his tutelage - male or female - make as big an impact as Tobin, it will be a huge bonus for our game.

BIG IN JAPAN

Qantas Socceroos like Josh Kennedy are enjoying a fabulous season in the J-League, and that's great news for the national team

Words Aidan Ormond

Here's a stat. Four of the five goals scored so far in Australia's 2014 FIFA World Cup Asian qualifiers have come from the J-League's growing posse of green and gold stars.

Last month, against Thailand in Brisbane, it was J-League sharp-shooter Josh Kennedy who was on target to level the tie 1-1 after the Thais took a shock early lead.

Then, the Nagoya Grampus striker turned provider to help Australia record the 2-1 victory. A cross into the Thai box found Kennedy lurking with intent before the ball found its way to another J-League Aussie, Shimizu S-Pulse forward Alex Brosque, to slam home a timely winner.

Kennedy, a J-League superstar after his goal-scoring exploits in Japan over the last two seasons, was again on target just days later. A brace helped Australia confirm a 3-1 victory in the heat of Saudi Arabia. It was a brilliant start to the campaign for the Aussies and their J-League connection.

Heading into the clash with Oman the Qantas Socceroo stats read: two games, two victories and five goals scored, of which 80% have been from J-League-based players. Add his assists, Kennedy has made a stunning start on Australia's 'Road to Rio'.

"Kennedy was involved in all five goals we scored in the two games, so what (more) can you ask from a centre forward?" said a thrilled Qantas Socceroo coach Holger Osieck after the win in Dammam.

Seems like a good time to be an Aussie in the region's strongest domestic league

"Josh has been excellent here in Japan," says Alex Brosque from his base in Japan. "He's a striker who's feared throughout the league and it's because of his goal-scoring ability. He's always a threat."

Kennedy's stats are eye-catching to say the least. The tall central striker arrived at Nagoya in June 2009 after a long spell in German football. He wasn't totally unknown though – Japan fans would've remembered him as the substitute who helped the green and gold turn the tide in that famous 3-1 win over the Blue Samurai at the 2006 FIFA World Cup in Germany

At Nagoya he's averaging around a goal every two games. The big Victorian (1.94m to be exact) is currently the top scorer in the J-League (15 goals from 24 matches at

Stopping big Josh has proved difficult for J-League defences

time of writing), and his partnership with fellow forward Keiji Tamada is the stuff of nightmares for opposing defences.

Kennedy's haul is impressive considering the other strikers nipping at his heels, including Sanfrecce's Tadanari Lee – the man who broke Qantas Socceroo hearts in the final of the AFC Asian Cup 2011 – and Mike Havenaar from Ventforet Kofu.

Last season Kennedy helped Nagoya win their first ever J-League title and was joint top scorer with Ryoichi Maeda. The Aussie was also named in the J-League's best eleven for that season. Who knows what'll happen this season as Nagoya battle Gamba Osaka, Kashiwa Reysol and Yokohama F Marinos for the J-League title.

Kennedy has been named in a J-League best eleven and leads the scoring charts

"Even when things aren't going his way he's still a threat," adds Brosque. "Josh can still pop up and score you a goal in the last minute and win you the game – that's the thing that's been great for him over here, he's done it over the past two-and-a-half years now.

"Top scorer last year and leading the charts as we speak this year, he's very much a handful and someone opposing defences don't like playing against."

And you could say Brosque is proving to be a nemesis for J-League defenders too. In just his first season in the J-League after switching from Hyundai A-League club Sydney FC to Shimizu, he's warmed to the task at hand.

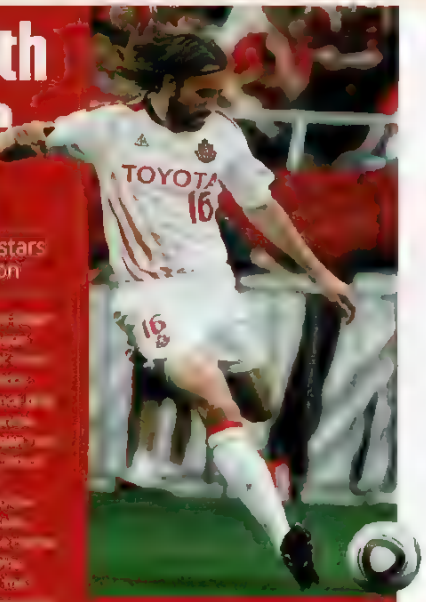
"As a foreigner in Japan – probably more so than in other countries – they want the foreign players to add something to teams. In other leagues around the world maybe foreign players are seen more as another piece of the puzzle whereas here you are really, really expected to add something or to provide something different," says Brosque.

Brosque first caught the eye in Japan playing for Sydney FC in the AFC Champions League 2007 against eventual champions Urawa Red Diamonds. ▸

Japan fans are enjoying a stellar year as are the Aussie J-League contingent

Oz link with Japanese football

Our current J-League stars continue a long tradition



Coincidentally two of his opponents in that side are now his team-mates and the Red Diamonds' coach back then was none other than Holger Osieck.

Now he's joined the expanding 'Kangaroo Club' of Australian players who are proudly flying the flag in the J-League, Brosque couldn't be prouder.

And with six goals this season (at time of writing) that can only be a good thing for his national team ambitions, says the striker.

"For me to come on in a World Cup qualifier and to score in that sort of game against Thailand was pretty special moment," he says with pride. "I'm glad that I did my little bit to help the boys."

On a personal note, Brosque says that there is a sharpness at training and in games that he had to adapt to after moving from Sydney FC, but says like everything, the more you do it the more you get accustomed to it.

"What Josh has been doing over here, as well as Eddie [Bosnar], Millsy [Mark Milligan] and Spira [Matthew Spiranovic], it's good to see Australians making the transition from the A-League to other leagues around the world and play well."

Brosque adds: "I think having this many of us here at the one time is good. We can all keep in touch with each other and see each other throughout the season.

"Josh has been so impressive for the national team and in the J-League. It makes you proud."

It makes us proud, too. o

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EXTRA FEATURES: SLIDESHOWS AND VIDEOS

SHOOT & SCORE

Test your friends or quietly exercise your grey matter. No prizes, just a bit of fun!

1 Which Dutch club did Sydney FC and Qantas Socceroo Brett Emerton formerly play for?

2 Name the scorer of the Qantas Socceroos' winning goal against Thailand in Australia's first match of 2014 FIFA World Cup Asian qualifiers in Brisbane last month?

3 Who scored the Qantas Socceroos' third goal against Saudi Arabia in 2014 FIFA World Cup Asian qualifiers in Dammam last month?

4 Which club has Qantas Socceroo Matt McKay recently signed for in Britain?

5 In which year did Qantas Socceroo keeper Mark Schwarzer make his national team debut?

6 True or false: Qantas Socceroo James Troisi was once on the books of Barclays English Premier League club Sunderland?

7 Name the manager at Mark Schwarzer's Barclays English Premier League club Fulham?

8 Where was Qantas Socceroos midfielder Carl Valeri born?

9 In which year did the Qantas Socceroos last play Oman?

10 True or false: star Qantas Socceroo striker Josh Kennedy was born in Wodonga, Victoria?

11 How tall is Josh Kennedy?

12 Last time the Qantas Socceroos played Oman, who scored the winning goal for the Aussies?

13 Which club does Qantas Socceroo midfielder Neil Kilkenny play for?

14 Who played in goal for the Qantas Socceroos in last June's friendly against Serbia in Melbourne?

15 Which club does Qantas Socceroo captain Lucas Neill play for?

ANSWERS: 1 Feyenoord 2 Alex Brosque 3 Luke Wilkshire 4 Queens Rangers 5 1993 6 True 7 Mark Jol 8 Canberra 9 2000 10 True 11 193cm 12 Brett Emerton 13 Bristol City 14 Adam Federici 15 All Lucas

MICK FANNING

Meet the world-class Aussie surfer and Qantas Socceroo fan who was school-mates with a certain Hyundai A-League star

Mick, how long have you been into football and what got you into the sport?
I started playing as a kid and was addicted from day one. I asked my mum if I could play at club level and she was like, "OK", and it went from there. I had to ride my bike half an hour each way but I didn't care. I played for Northern NSW Country and we won the state titles one year. I think it may have been U-16s.

Any favourite Qantas Socceroo memories?
John Aloisi's goal that put Australia into the 2006 World Cup. It wasn't just a huge moment for football in Australia, but also a huge sporting moment in our country's history.

Have you met any of our boys from the Qantas Socceroos?
I have met couple of player's over the years and they all seem like really nice guys.

Favourite?
I guess Cahill is the top of everyone's list but Schwarzer is so good... he'd be my favourite.

How'd playing in the Hyundai A-League...?
I think it's great for the Hyundai A-League to be able to bring home the best players.

Do you follow the Hyundai A-League?
A little bit. I'm away so much that I miss a lot. I did watch the Grand Final earlier this year and it was incredible. I also like to keep an eye for [Perth Glory striker] Shane Smeltz, who I went to school with.

How confident are you the Qantas Socceroos will make the 2014 FIFA World Cup?
I think they will do it. They have the confidence now that they belong there so they will thrive on that. I think the team gets stronger all the time.

What's your message to the boys ahead of tonight's game?
Good luck and believe in yourselves.

CHAMPIONS LEAGUE SPECIAL

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November 2011
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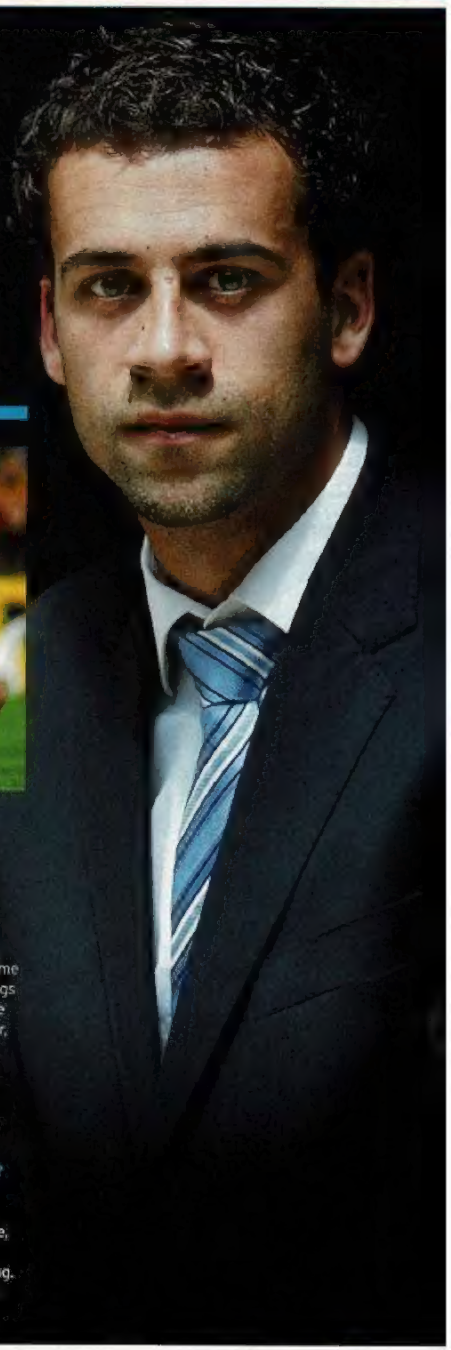
FIVE MINUTES WITH... ALEX BROSQUE

Our goal-scoring sub tells us about his bub and how he's adapted to being 'Big Daddy' in Japan



Alex, I know you were an avid gamer. Has that continued since you joined J-League side Shimizu S-Pulse this year?
Actually Aidan I left my PS3 [PlayStation3] at home. Moving over here with the little one, I sort of had my hands full. I probably haven't played a PS3 game since you last interviewed me back in February.

So what's your take on being a Daddy?
I guess like a lot of guys, I was a bit scared and didn't know how I'd go being a father. In my head I still saw myself as a kid. But as soon as she came along instinct takes over. You adapt to the little changes. Sleep is probably the worst. I used to definitely get 10-12 hours a night! I love my sleep. So that's been pretty much cut in half since she's come along.

Living in Japan with the language barrier and helping raise a child, how much of a challenge has it all been for you?
Being over here has been good. It's allowed me to really enjoy coming home and spending time with her. And there aren't as many things to distract you like back home. Here I've just really enjoyed watching her grow up. My missus [Bianca] does a fantastic job of looking after the little one.

And yourself with all the travel...?
There's a lot more pressure and stress on the family than me. As players we're not home 24-7, so most of the regular day-to-day things fall onto your partner. You do worry and the simple things like if the little one has a fever, you can't just pop her over to the doctor, as they mostly don't speak English. It has been a challenge but I couldn't tell you the difference because I haven't raised a child at home. This is all I know.

What's the best thing about being a Dad?
At times playing overseas can get quite stressful and you start to miss home, but the best part of my day is when I drive home, open the door and the little one screams, "Daddy" and comes over and gives me a hug. That for me is probably the most enjoyable part of being a father.

Irish-born Christine has been converted into a mad green and gold fan.

CHRISTINE WHYTE

Christine tells us her how she got hooked on the Qantas Socceroos during that special night six years ago in Sydney

AT A GLANCE

Name: Christine Whyte
Hyundai A-League club: Sydney FC
Occupation: Director of Revenue Management at The Observatory Hotel

When did you become a Qantas Socceroo fan and can you remember your first game?
My first game was the 16th November 2005 – the big qualifier against Uruguay. I had no idea what to expect and the enormity of the occasion had yet to fully register. The carnival-like atmosphere on the train was wonderful and it was to become even more dramatic inside the stadium. You could feel electricity in the air.

Early memories of the night were the standing ovation for Viduka when he walked on the field, the emotional tribute to Johnny Warren and Harry Kewell's immediate impact on the game.

Later, I remember the tension building in the second half and the worried concentration on faces around me. When, it comes to the penalty shoot-out I had to rely on TV replay afterwards for assistance given it was almost impossible to watch. People held their breath with every kick of the ball.

I still cannot watch Aloisi take that shot to this day without getting misty eyed. Time stood still. When it hit the back of the net I could swear we all froze before erupting in one mass hysterical outpouring of relief, joy and elation.

Strangers kissed and hugged and none of us wanted to leave that stadium wishing the thrill of winning to never end. That night I was hooked, locked in a relationship that grew to fever pitch and has never abated since...

Your favourite Qantas Socceroo and why?
This is difficult three-way decision for me. My heart lies with Harry. When he plays, he is inspirational and his skill is undeniable. Simon Hill said it best when he scored against Croatia in the 2006 World Cup: "It had to be Harry!"

Tim Cahill's uncanny knack of popping up, literally, from nowhere to score is nothing short of breath taking. He is truly one of our greatest and genuine ambassadors. And Mark Schwarzer will go down in history as one of our greatest Socceroos. He made that momentous penalty save against Uruguay in '05 and very often goalkeepers get overlooked for their contribution.

Holger Osieck is...?
Crucial to the future development of football and the next generation of players in this country. He needs to leave a legacy.

Confident we will be in Brazil 2014?
Luck was on our side [against Thailand]. I admire the players for publicly admitting it. This ability to improve will take us to 2014.

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EDITOR Aidan Ormond
CONTRIBUTORS Trevor Treharne, Fraser Kid
CREATIVE DIRECTOR Sam Grimmer
ART DIRECTOR Danny McGonigle
HEAD DESIGNER Andrew Bennett
SUB EDITOR Paul Hansford
PREPRESS Nathan Sargent

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EDITOR IN CHIEF Trevor Treharne
PUBLISHER Andy Jackson
SALES MANAGER Graham Heard
TO ADVERTISE CALL (02) 8399 7690
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My Perfect Roos

Former Qantas Socceroos and AC Milan shot-stopper Zeljko Kalac selects his best Roos XI with a 4-4-1-1 formation deployed by big "Spider"

GK
Mark Bosnich
One of the best shot-stoppers I've ever seen.

RB
Brett Emerton
I'd have him in my team any time... always getting forward.

CB
Craig Moore
Another brilliant leader who read the game fantastically.

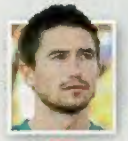
CB
Tony Popovic
A great leader and a very physical presence.

LB
Tony Vidmar
All heart and always in the right position.

RM
Robbie Slater
Very direct, always took on players and a great crosser.

CM
Ned Zelic
Like Okon, brilliant on the ball and a fantastic passer.

CM
Paul Okon
Brilliant passer of the ball who seemed to glide across the park.



LM
Harry Kewell
One of my all-time favourites, one of the best ever to play for us.

AM
Tim Cahill
Great prowess coming in late for goals just in behind the striker.

CF
Mark Viduka
At his peak, probably the best striker I've seen.

SPIDER'S BENCH

Milan Ivanovic
A classic ball-playing defender.

Zarko Odzakov
Skilful midfielder from the '80s.

Alex Tobin
Stalwart in central defence for 11 years.

Graham Jennings
Attacking defender with great engines.

John Kosmina
Burly central striker and lethal finisher.

Graham Arnold
Lead the Aussie front-line admirably

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